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2016-12-01

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Aunesluoma, J. & Rainio-Niemi, J. 2016, 'Neutrality as Identity : Finland's Quest for Security in the Cold War', Journal of Cold War Studies, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 51-78. [https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS\\_a\\_00680](https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00680)

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/232331>

[https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS\\_a\\_00680](https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00680)

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# Neutrality as Identity?

## Finland's Quest for Security in the Cold War

❖ Juhana Aunesluoma and Johanna Rainio-Niemi

### Post-Cold War Images of Finland's Neutrality and Identity

The view of most scholars and other authors is that Finland's neutrality was the result of a hard-core realistic assessment of the political facts of the post-1945 world and their meaning for a small country. Because of this, Finland's policy of neutrality, in contrast to Sweden's, for example, never became an integral part of Finnish identity. Neutrality in this view was of secondary importance, a pragmatic instrument for keeping Finland on the Western side of the Iron Curtain. The main priority was to find options that allowed for as much West European integration as possible, in line with Finland's inherently Western identity. Neutrality in this context was not desirable—it was a posture Finland was forced to adopt by the geopolitical facts of the Cold War and Finland's drift into the politically challenging area between East and West—but it was the best option available at the time.<sup>1</sup>

With the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of its geopolitical structure, neutrality became obsolete, unwelcome baggage as Finland pursued membership in the European Union (EU) from 1992 onward. Neutrality did not fit the image of Finland as an active and committed EU member, and, having been employed merely as an instrument to secure Finland's immediate security interests and national survival, it could be abandoned almost overnight. A new national consensus concerning Finland's entry into the EU

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1. For recent studies and other historically reflective accounts that demonstrate this widely shared interpretation see, for example, Erkkä Railo, "Pienen valtion selviytymisstrategia," in Erkkä Railo and Ville Laamanen, eds., *Suomi muuttuvassa maailmassa: Ulkosuhteiden ja kansallisen itseymmärryksen historiaa* (Helsinki: Edita, 2010); Jukka Tarkka, *Karhun kainalossa: Suomen kylmä sota 1947–1990* (Helsinki: Otava, 2012); Jaakko Blomberg, *Vakauden kaipuu: Kylmän sodan loppu ja Suomi* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2011); Paavo Lipponen, *Järkeä voittaa: Suomalainen identiteetti globalisaation aikakaudella* (Helsinki: Otava 2008); and Vilho Harle and Sami Moisio, *Missä on Suomi? Kansallisen identiteettipolitiikan historia ja geopolitiikka* (Tampere, Finland: Vastapaino, 2000).

followed. “No longer are we watching developments from a position restrained by the straitjacket of our Cold War neutrality,” the secretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs put it in 1999.<sup>2</sup> Finland’s EU membership, as well as the security it provided, was seen as a welcome substitute for the country’s policy of neutrality and as a way for Finland to prove its “long-repressed Western identity.” The 1990s came generally to be hailed as the “golden era” of Finland’s identity project, the decade when Finland was finally able to join the West.<sup>3</sup>

A closer look, however, reveals that two versions of the Finnish “Western identity thesis” came into being in the 1990s. One stressed Finland’s “return to the West” through the EU. The other emphasized Finland’s essential Westernness during the Cold War and saw EU membership merely as a confirmation and entrenchment of this fact. Both post-Cold War narratives served the same political-identity purpose of legitimizing Finland’s EU membership and helped to position it as a break “with the ties that bind us with the past,” as Foreign Trade Minister Pertti Salolainen—a notable supporter of Finnish membership in both the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—said in a parliamentary debate in 1992.<sup>4</sup>

Although matters of identity have been accorded a central role in Finland’s “return to the West” and its EU accession, their role in the policy of neutrality has attracted only negative attention (when it has received any attention at all). In the prevailing interpretations of Finnish history and identity, the Cold War period, with its policy of neutrality, stands out mainly as a deviation from Finland’s essentially Western self or has been detached from Finnish identity altogether. As Paavo Lipponen, the Social Democratic prime minister of Finland from 1995 to 2003, wrote in 2008, neutrality came to an end with the end of the Cold War and has no role whatsoever for Finland in the context of the new Europe. Because neutrality, the argument goes, was never anything more than a policy line chosen on purely pragmatic grounds, it leaves behind no legacy.<sup>5</sup>

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2. Jukka Valtasaari, “A Finnish Perspective on the Changing Europe,” Speech given in the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Shanghai, 10 February 1999.

3. For discussion of Finland’s 1990s identity politics, see Harle and Moisio, *Missä on Suomi?* pp. 56, 275, 282. Viewing the same trends from another perspective, Christopher Browning speaks of a “post-finlandization” and “Westernizing” narrative in Finland’s identity and foreign policy of the 1990s. See, Christopher Browning, “Coming Home or Moving Home? ‘Westernising’ Narratives in Finnish Foreign Policy and the Re-interpretation of Past Identities,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (March 2002), pp. 47–72.

4. *Valtiopäivät 1992, pöytäkirjat 1* (1993), p. 647; and Klaus Törnudd, “Ties That Bind to the Recent Past: Debating Security Policy in Finland within the Context of the Membership in the European Union,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (March 1996), pp. 37–68.

5. Lipponen, *Järki voittaa*, pp. 212–213.

In this article we argue that the prevailing image of Finland's Cold War neutrality is essentially a product of the post-Cold War era. Although this image has served Finland's domestic and European integration policies since the mid-1990s, it cannot be taken as a sufficient, historically accurate explanation of Finnish neutrality. Our understanding of this topic needs to be buttressed with historical research. In this article we ask whether neutrality did have meaning for Cold War Finland's political identity, and we focus on continuities that have been largely neglected both in the public debate and in existing scholarly research.

## Neutrality in the Shadow of the Soviet Union

The present-day image—emphasizing neutrality's instrumentalist character—is illustrative of Finland's complex relationship with its own policy of neutrality.<sup>6</sup> This ambiguity at the core of Finnish neutrality goes back to the earliest Cold War years: of all the European neutrals discussed in this special issue of the journal, Finland's Cold War neutrality was perhaps the most precarious. Finland's lengthy border with the Soviet Union was bound to have a direct influence on Finnish foreign and defense policies. Further, Finland's attempts to consolidate its neutrality never ceased to be conditioned by its bilateral security pact with the Soviet Union. This pact, the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (the FCMA Treaty), was signed in 1948 and then extended for twenty-year periods in 1955, 1973, and 1983.

The first article of the treaty obliged Finland, “in the eventuality of Finland, or the Soviet Union through Finnish territory, becoming the object of an armed attack by Germany or any state allied with the latter . . . true to its obligations as an independent state, [to] fight to repel the attack.” Furthermore, in the event of such an attack, Finland was to “use all its available forces for defending its territorial integrity by land, sea and air, and will do so within the frontiers of Finland in accordance with obligations defined in the present Treaty and, *if necessary*, with the assistance of, or jointly with the Soviet Union.”<sup>7</sup>

From Finland's perspective, the most important point was that the treaty differed in several respects from similar treaties signed by the USSR with the

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6. Tarkka, *Karhun kainalossa*.

7. J. A. S. Greenville, ed., *The Major International Treaties, 1914–1973* (London: Methuen 1974), p. 364, emphasis added.

East European countries in 1947. First, the treaty applied solely to Finnish territory, making Finland responsible for the defense of its own borders and territory but not obligating it to participate in any military action outside this area. Second, although the treaty mentioned the possibility of Soviet military assistance, it specified no mechanisms for automatically triggering such assistance. All such decisions were to be preceded by mutual political consultation.

The culmination of the Geneva spirit of détente opened the way for more ambitious elaborations of neutrality in Europe in the mid-1950s, and the specifics of the FCMA Treaty allowed Finland to make plausible claims for military non-alignment and neutrality.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Austria, another newcomer neutral, the Austrian State Treaty (1955) marked the end of the Four Powers occupation and the restoration of the country's sovereignty. Permanent neutrality was also anchored in the country's Federal Constitutional Law.<sup>9</sup> In Finland, the renewal of the FCMA Treaty in 1955 was accompanied by an explicit mutual declaration that the treaty was based on respect for Finland's wish to follow a policy of neutrality. After 1955, the foreign policy orientations of both Austria and Finland were, albeit for different reasons, forged within a broader policy framework resting on more firmly established examples of neutrality; namely, Switzerland and especially Sweden, whose example Austria and Finland followed when they joined the United Nations (UN) in 1955–1956.<sup>10</sup>

The possibility of consultations over Soviet military assistance never disappeared from the horizon of Finland's neutrality policy. This potential means of exercising control over Finland raised questions that hung over all major crises in Finnish-Soviet relations during the Cold War. Inside Finland, the desire to avoid calls for consultations led to efforts to anticipate potentially negative Soviet reactions. This practice would lead to international and domestic debates on "Finlandization." The concept appeared in Austria in the 1950s, with frequent references to Finland as an undesirable model of

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8. Finland had aspired to remain neutral before and during the Second World War but was unsuccessful. In the negotiations over the FCMA Treaty in 1948, Finland's delegation was determined to include in the text a paragraph explaining that Finland's aim was to remain outside the super-power conflicts. For Finland, this sentence was key to later elaborations of the country's Cold War neutrality.

9. On Austria see, for example, Michael Gehler, "From Non-alignment to Neutrality: Austria's Transformation during the First East-West Détente, 1953–1958," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Fall 2005), pp. 104–136.

10. Johanna Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War: The Politics of Neutrality in Austria and Finland* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 53–59, 62–64.

neutrality, and it became internationally known in the 1970s, especially in Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Suspicion toward neutrality was common on the Western side of the Cold War divide. In general, any fuzziness along the interface zones between the two blocs was seen as a source of undesired unpredictability.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, if the states located on these intermediary zones were small and aimed at neutrality, this simply added to the unpredictability. In a world ruled by hard power, small states were seen as incapable of resisting the external pressures and manipulation that were thought to be part of the day-to-day repertoire of Cold War politics. In this light, Finland's neutrality seemed particularly vulnerable.

From the Soviet perspective, Finland's attempts at credible neutrality remained burdened by recent Finnish history. On several occasions, the Soviet Union used Finland's previous German connections to question the credibility of Finland's neutrality policy. During the early part of World War II, Finland was attacked by the Soviet Union and fought a brief but intense war against the Red Army, and later on during the war Finland was in a de facto military alliance with Germany. The fear of Finland allying with a revitalized West Germany was a key factor motivating Soviet reservations about Finland's participation in international organizations and, later, in European integration, which the Soviet Union interpreted as Western bloc-building.

After the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was ousted from power in October 1964, the mood in Moscow began to change with regard to the desirability of Finland's active neutrality policy. After the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Soviet leaders withdrew their acknowledgment of Finland's neutrality, causing a prolonged schism between Finnish and Soviet foreign policy officials on how to define Finland's foreign policy in official documents and public statements. Unsurprisingly, this coincided with a new eagerness on the part of the United States and other Western countries to

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11. A good contemporary summary of the Finlandization debate, as well as a Finnish response to the criticism voiced in the West, is Max Jakobson, "Substance and Appearance: Finland," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 5 (Summer 1980), pp. 1034–1044. In the 2010s, the concept of Finlandization has attracted renewed interest in discussions of China's relations with Taiwan. See Bruce Gilley, "Not So Dire Straits. How the Finlandization of Taiwan Benefits U.S. Security," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (January/February 2010), pp. 44–60; and Vang Chang, Hans Mouritzen, and Bruce Gilley, "To the Finland Station: Is Taiwan Selling Out to China?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (May/June 2010), pp. 128–133.

12. The potential for shifting alignments was at the core of Hans J. Morgenthau's idea of the balance of power in *Power among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1948). In Morgenthau's view, the commitment of "nations" to alliances provided the cornerstone of stability in the prevailing Cold War bloc system.

proclaim and praise Finland's neutrality. But the unintended consequence was that Finland's neutrality was effectively called into question in Finno-Soviet relations. Not until autumn 1989, when Mikhail Gorbachev visited Helsinki, did the Soviet Union acknowledge Finland's neutrality without reservations.

Even though the foundations and credibility of Finnish neutrality were considered to be shaky for a long time, both internationally and domestically, the suspicions were to be alleviated by practical considerations concerning the need for reconsolidation in postwar Europe. The superpowers tacitly accepted neutrality as a fact on the ground in the division of Europe, and the neutral countries, in turn, found an active role in multilateral diplomacy. For each of the neutrals other than Switzerland, which did not join the UN, the United Nations became a key arena in which to demonstrate a distinctive policy line and to monitor the other neutrals' stances on international disputes. From the 1960s onward, European neutrality was more and more associated with an active foreign policy stance. Neutrality was no longer seen as isolationism or exceptionalism but as a legitimate policy allowing small developed countries to play a constructive role as mediators in international conflicts and as hosts of superpower summits and negotiations. Austria, Switzerland, and especially Sweden used neutrality as a platform from which to express critical views on Cold War issues, whereas Finland pursued a lower profile, more "doctor" than "judge" in international relations, as President Urho Kekkonen (1956–1981) once said. Nevertheless, the peak of European Cold War neutrality—the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—was also the high point of Finland's neutrality policies. The CSCE's Final Accords were signed in Helsinki in 1975.<sup>13</sup>

## Neutrality as History

Despite these positive developments, neutrality remained vulnerable to the suspicions and tensions in East-West relations throughout the Cold War. This was the case not only with Finnish neutrality but with all neutral states.

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13. Many historians have recently addressed neutrality in their studies of the CSCE process. See, for instance, Thomas Fischer, *Neutral Power in CSCE: The N+N States and the Making of the Helsinki Accords* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009). On Finland in particular, see Seppo Hentilä, "Finland and the German States: Finland's German Policy in the Framework of European Detente," in Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente: Eastern Europe and Western Europe in the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2008); and Juhana Aunesluoma, "Finlandization in Reverse: The CSCE and the Rise and Fall of Economic Detente, 1968–1975," in Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart, eds., *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 98–112.

Additionally, as the bipolar divide of international relations intensified, new challenges to the credibility of neutrality emerged. As a result, the scope of neutrality grew, and what had started as military non-alignment in peacetime came to encompass a much wider field of policymaking by the 1970s and 1980s. No longer just a part of foreign and security policy, neutrality increasingly influenced and shaped domestic politics.

Practicing neutrality required sensitivity and balancing skills from policymakers and analysts throughout the Cold War. One illustration of this is how much of the Cold War-era literature on Finland's neutrality was written by practitioners: diplomats and journalists, as well as the era's most prominent experts on national history, international law, military strategy, and international politics. Literature on neutrality was especially plentiful in the neutral countries, and the research produced from the late 1960s until the mid-1980s allows the tracing of a relatively coherent picture of contemporary European neutrality. This literature, which is oriented toward policy, emphasizes the positive contributions of the small European neutrals to the international community in the form of such tasks as "bridge-building," UN peacekeeping, and the hosting of summits.<sup>14</sup>

Once a core topic in the political science literature, neutrality became a historians' topic in the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> The availability of new archival sources gave rise to a series of monographs that examined the early phases of European neutrality. Jussi Hanhimäki's *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the "Finnish Solution,"* published in 1997, paved the way for post-Cold War studies that have contributed greatly to a more detailed understanding of Finland in the Cold War. The regular release of new archival sources has provided the basis for this new stream of neutrality research, with the availability of documents determining the time periods covered by analyses. Seppo Hentilä has carried out internationally recognized research on Finland's relations with the two German states, and Kimmo Rentola has explored the Finnish Communists' relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> In addition to studies that

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14. A useful outline of postwar European neutrality is provided in Harto Hakovirta, *East-West Conflict and European Neutrality* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1988). This study, which came out in the sunset years of the Cold War, is also valuable from the historical point of view and is therefore used here not only as a research tool but as an illustration of the understanding of neutrality concepts in the late Cold War period.

15. For an overview of the existing literature on Finland in the Cold War, see Mikko Majander, "Post-Cold War Historiography in Finland," in Thorsten B. Olesen, ed., *The Cold War—and the Nordic Countries: Historiography at a Crossroads* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2004), pp. 43–82.

16. Hentilä has published several studies in Finnish and articles in German and English. See, for example, Seppo Hentilä, *Neutral zwischen den beiden Deutschen Staaten: Finnland und Deutschland im*



have made use of archival material in the Soviet Union, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, a newer strand of historical research focuses on recently released materials from Finland's national archives.<sup>17</sup>

Although the existing research has made remarkable contributions, its focus has been more on Finland's international position than on neutrality, and its methodology has mostly aligned with the classical tradition of diplomatic and political history. The role of Finland's presidents, Juho Kusti Paasikivi (1946–1956) and Urho Kekkonen (1956–1982), has received much of the attention. At the same time, the research provides ample evidence that Finnish neutrality was initially regarded with skepticism by other countries, gaining limited credence only over time. Finland's own actions also left it open to justified criticism, regardless of the apparent sincerity of the country's attempts at neutrality.

Although the flaws of neutrality, as revealed by the careful scrutiny of diplomatic and policy documents, have led many historians to neglect the topic altogether, we suggest a different take. The imperfections, contested nature, and problematic credibility of Finnish Cold War neutrality should

*Kalten Krieg* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2006). Kimmo Rentola has studied the triangular interrelationship of the Finnish Communists, President Urho Kekkonen, and the Soviet Union. See Kimmo Rentola, *Niin kylmää että polttaa: Kommunistit, Kreml* (Helsinki: Otava, 1997); and Kimmo Rentola, *Vallankumouksen aave: Vasemmisto, Kekkonen ja Beljakov 1970* (Helsinki: Otava, 2005). See also Mikko Majander, *Pohjoismaa vai kansandemokratia? Sosiaalidemokraatit, kommunistit ja Suomen kansainvälinen asema 1944–1951* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2004), which focuses on Social Democrats, including their Scandinavian connections. Majander has published further results of his studies on Finnish social democracy and the Cold War in Mikko Majander, *Demokratiaa dollareilla: SDP ja puoluerahoitus pulataloudessa 1945–1954* (Helsinki: Otava, 2007), which charts the origins of the Social Democrats' party finances during the Cold War and, especially, the Social Democrats' Western contacts. Research by a younger generation of Finnish scholars published in English includes Aappo Kähkönen, *The Soviet Union, Finland and the Cold War: The Finnish Card in the Soviet Foreign Policy, 1956–1959* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006), which is based on Soviet archives. A study that widens the analysis of the economic Cold War using British sources is Niklas Jensen-Eriksen, *Hitting Them Hard? Promoting British Export Interests in Finland, 1957–1972* (Helsinki: Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, 2006).

17. Illustrative examples are Timo Soikkanen's studies focusing on the history of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the "President's Ministry." See Timo Soikkanen, *Presidentin ministeriö: Ulkoasianhallinto ja ulkopoliittikan hoito Kekkonen kaudella* (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2003); and Timo Soikkanen, *Presidentin ministeriö: Ulkoasianhallinto ja ulkopoliittikan hoito Kekkonen kaudella, Vol. 2, Uudistumisen, ristiriitojen ja menetyksen aika 1970–1981* (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2003). See also Pekka Visuri's overview of Finland's defense policies during the Kekkonen era—Pekka Visuri, *Idän ja Lännen välissä: Puolustuspolitiikka presidentti Kekkonen kaudella* (Helsinki: National Defense University, 2010)—and Juhana Aunesluoma's study of Finland's foreign trade and integration policies from 1917 to 1995: Juhana Aunesluoma, *Vapaakaupan tiellä: Suomen kauppa- ja integraatiopolitiikka maailmansodasta EU-aikaan* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2011). Finally, Rentola's analysis of the history of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service (SUPO)—Kimmo Rentola, *Ratakatu 12: Suojelupoliisin historia 1939–2009* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009)—demonstrates that SUPO had close contacts with the Western intelligence services throughout the Cold War.

be seen not as the endpoint of discussion but as a starting point for a new wave of research. Despite flaws, Finnish neutrality was powerful both as a self-constructed symbol and as a political and social practice in its own time. It influenced people's thinking and self-image. Cold War-era neutrality in Finland is thus worth studying, but with an approach that leans more on a social constructivist epistemology, which allows us to analyze aspects of neutrality that have proved most durable. These include neutrality's role in the formation of political identity, a role that has not attracted much attention in previous considerations of Finland's Cold War neutrality.

## Neutrality and the Politics of Identity in Finland

This article makes several interrelated claims. First, historical research materials do not provide much support for the argument that Finland's neutrality in the Cold War period was free of identity politics. The claimed pragmatism of Finland's policy of neutrality does not, as such, exclude the possibility of identity politics. The idea of Finland's neutrality as distinctively "pragmatic" was initially voiced in relation to international law, according to which Finland, strictly speaking, did not meet the criteria of a neutral state because of the 1948 FCMA Treaty with the Soviet Union. One—perhaps the number one—task of Finnish foreign policy during the Cold War was to find the semantic tools and practical interpretations of the 1948 treaty that would allow Finland to make its claims for neutrality credible.<sup>18</sup> This was a choice not between identity and pragmatism but between legalism and pragmatism. However, after a certain amount of repetition, the emphasis on pragmatism began to take on the elements of a political identity.

Second, the five decades from 1945 to 1995 cannot be regarded as a time when Finland merely drifted along in a position that contemporaries saw as completely alien to the nation's political identity. Identity projects were a real part of Cold War Finland, being centered on the policy of neutrality and the defense of that policy's credibility in the eyes of international and domestic

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18. A good example of the Finns' efforts to interpret the 1948 treaty so as to allow for Finland's credible neutrality is Max Jakobson, *Finnish Neutrality* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1968). Among the numerous memoirs by Finnish Foreign Ministry officials that offer useful vantage points on the issue, see Risto Hyvärinen, *Virkamiehiä, viekkautta ja vakoilua* (Helsinki: Otava, 2000); and Keijo Korhonen, *Sattumakorpraali: Korhonen Kekkonen komennossa* (Helsinki: Otava, 1999). The eight-volume authorized biography of President Kekkonen is a monumental study of the president's reign and was written by a Foreign Ministry diplomat, Juhani Suomi, *Urho Kekkonen 1–8* (Helsinki: Otava, 1986–2000).

audiences.<sup>19</sup> Until recently, the policy of neutrality was one of the main threads in the national narrative about Finland's successful transformation from a poor, backward country to a highly developed, peaceful, and socially egalitarian Nordic welfare state in the 1970s and 1980s. Neutrality—although never completely undisputed—grew close, even dear, to the Finnish people and elites and was therefore constitutive of Finland's self-perception during the Cold War. In addition, officials spared no effort in their attempts to make neutrality popular, even beloved, among the people. These efforts were relatively successful. By 1990, the idea of Finland's neutrality had become deeply internalized among both decision-makers and the broader public.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, neutrality had become a part of Finland's national identity.

Third, the most abiding legacies of European Cold War neutrality are found in the realm of identities and mentalities. This can be seen in the remarkable degree of continuity in policy formulations at the highest decision-making levels at the end of the Cold War. Further, despite the major changes that took place in the 1990s—the end of the Cold War, the growth of the EU, and active participation of the European neutrals in international crisis management missions—none of the neutral countries chose to align militarily with NATO. During the first 25 years after the end of the Cold War, popular opinion in the neutral countries remained steady in its opposition to potential NATO membership. Although sentiment has changed somewhat since 2014, neutrality and the role of the non-involved mediator still enjoy a special place in the minds of Finns, irrespective of the broader changes that have taken place in the international order, the changing connotations attached to neutrality itself, and the willingness of decision-makers to reconsider the matter.<sup>21</sup>

## **The Ideological Cold War, Neutrality, and National Identity<sup>22</sup>**

In the post-1945 period, conceptions of neutrality were politicized, forms of neutrality were diversified, and all sides found a use for neutrality. Neutrality,

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19. Louis Clerc, "Gaining Recognition and Understanding: Finland's Image Policy, 1948–1966," forthcoming.

20. See, for instance, the opinion survey series conducted by the Advisory Board for Defense Information (Maanpuolustustiedotuksen suunnittelukunta, MTS) since the 1970s.

21. A good example of this view is a statement made by Markku Kivinen, the director of the Aleksanteri-Institute, a Russian and East European studies center, at Helsinki University in September 2010, maintaining that Finland should still be able to proclaim neutrality in future conflicts. See Markku Kivinen, "Suurvaltojen eturistiriidat eivät ole kadonneet," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 23 September 2010.

22. This section and the two following sections draw from Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*.

no longer just a wartime phenomenon, was gaining new significance as a peacetime policy. The more “normalized” the Cold War contestation grew, the greater the number of policy fields in which the credibility of neutrality could be tested.

One of the testing grounds was created by the ideological contest between the two systems of values and the competition for the “hearts and minds” of ordinary people. This realm of confrontation, which the West saw as a battle between democracy and authoritarian Communism, has attracted growing attention in Cold War studies in recent years.<sup>23</sup> The attention is justified: Cold War contemporaries were intensely aware of the ideological dimensions of the conflict and its impact on citizens in their everyday public lives, from parliament to the workplace, from schools to civil society organizations and the media. The ideological dimensions of the conflict preoccupied contemporary minds irrespective of whether the people—citizens of one of the two blocs or of the neutral states—wished to take sides in the struggle and irrespective of whether they believed ideology “truly” mattered in world politics or was simply the veil behind which the “real” interests and policies were pursued.

Regardless of whether the governments of the neutral countries saw the Cold War bipolarity as a correct or desirable way to interpret international politics, the reality of Cold War ideological confrontation meant that neutrality was to be tested in these terms. Western-oriented Cold Warriors asked loudly in the early 1950s whether the requirements of neutrality were leading to compromises in the neutrals’ commitment to democracy and to social, political, and economic freedom. Eastern-oriented Cold Warriors, on the other hand, doubted—ever more frequently as the 1950s progressed—that the

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23. Today the view that the Cold War was an all-embracing contest between two “empires” trying to prove “the universal applicability of their ideologies” is mainstream in Cold War research. See, for instance, Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007); Mark Kramer, “Power, Politics, and the Long Duration of the Cold War,” in Silvio Pons and Federico Romero, eds., *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War: Issues, Interpretations, Periodizations* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), pp. 21–40; and David C. Engerman, “Ideology and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917–1962,” in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 20–43. For more recent research on the battles over “the hearts and minds of the people,” see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1998); Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shephard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy and Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds., *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945–1960* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003); and Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

neutrals' commitment to a Western style of democracy, economy, and economic integration could be reconciled with their obligations of true neutrality.

Although the neutrals have typically been thought of as separate national vacuums outside the reach of the ideological Cold War, this separation was not a given. On both sides of the divide, Cold War alliances were justified with totalizing notions of a battle between good and evil that left scant room for neutrality. The standard explanation given by the neutrals was that the combination of democracy and neutrality was not and should not be a problem. Quite the contrary. Sweden's and Switzerland's histories were underlined ever more energetically as living proof of the mutually reinforcing interrelationship between neutrality and democracy. However, the ideological bipolarization of the Cold War affected the concept of neutrality in a way that even the strongest of the neutrals could not ignore.

To retain "ownership" of their national policies of neutrality, and to prevent neutrality from being undercut by the ever-more-politicized Cold War, the European neutral countries increasingly took the initiative in articulating their policies of neutrality. The national standpoints needed to be as precise and easily comprehensible as possible. Neutrality had to be explained not only to international audiences but also to policymakers, opinion makers, and the people, the voters, at home. Unable to lean on allies outside state borders and with the credibility of their neutrality under constant assessment from outside, each neutral country's government sought strong domestic support for its policies. Reliance on a general conscript army strengthened the need for clear-cut concepts and domestic consensus.

The continual need to be clear and articulate in order to keep the international Cold War at a distance, combined with the particular need for a strong domestic consensus, played a tremendous role in (1) the emergence of what, since the end of the Cold War, has often been described as the neutrals' own "doctrinal truths"; and (2), in the creation of the formal and informal networks through which these "truths" were to be adopted in national society.<sup>24</sup> By way of contrast to the two competing "ways of life" and as a defense against the related battles over the hearts and minds of the people, each of the European neutral countries chose to focus on the formulation of its own, distinctive, national worldview—with neutrality *and* democracy as the cornerstones. Neutrality and national identity were thus brought into close contact with each other in all of the European neutral countries.

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24. See Hakovirta, *East-West Conflict*, pp. 249–250.

To the extent that the neutral countries managed to stay outside Cold War confrontations—or at least managed to create the impression of remaining on the sidelines—this status did not come about automatically. Rather it was the result of conscious efforts and systematic policies that aimed to defend the neutrals' right to existence and to explain their ways of life in relation to the bipolar global political scene.

## **Revising the Core Values of the Nation and State in Finland**

Finland, too, had policies that aimed to turn neutrality and democracy into the “core values” of the nation and the state and to integrate them with what today's research literature calls national identity. These policies, which surfaced in Finland in the latter half of the 1950s, have been known from the outset as *henkinen maanpuolustus* (HMP), a direct translation of *Geistige Landesverteidigung* (GLV), the German-language term used in Switzerland since the 1930s.<sup>25</sup> Inspiration was also drawn from the Swedish concept of psychological defense (*psykologiskt försvar*), but the Swiss approach, with its explicitly broader emphasis on state ideology, proved more attractive in Finland. This was not least because of the widely felt need to rethink the foundations of the national ethos. Finland had just lost a war and hoped to foster new, more amicable relations with its eastern neighbor. The anti-Communist and anti-Soviet overtones of its earlier posture had to be eliminated. Switzerland's GLV policies proved to be of great interest to Finland, just as they did for Austria, another newcomer neutral engaged in a broad rethinking of its foreign policy posture at this time.

In Finland, adoption of the HMP policies was facilitated by the need to put an end to the pervasive disagreements among Finland's non-Communist elites that had marked public life throughout the 1950s. These disputes concerned

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25. *Geistige Landesverteidigung* does not directly translate into English. The contemporary actors used “spiritual national defense” when referring to the policy in international circles. The meaning of “spiritual,” however, is not identical with *geistig/henkinen*, which can also be translated as “ideational.” The GLV/HMP policies were policies of ideological defense—the term “defense” being intended to draw an explicit connection to the ideological warfare being waged by the Cold War superpowers. In Switzerland, GLV policy had been an official state policy since the 1930s. Its aim was to defend the existence of the Swiss state and its distinctive ideological basis—that is, the ideals of democracy, federalism, and neutrality—against the authoritarian regimes of the time. The policy was updated in the 1950s to address the realities of the Cold War world, with Communism emerging as democracy's main enemy, even though a watchful eye was to be kept on the potential resurrection of the other enemy—fascism—too.

the domestic political consequences of the new relationship with the USSR and the question of how to deal with Finland's relatively sizeable Communist movement. All sides shared the ideal of strong national consensus, but views on how to define and achieve it varied. Many saw no need to break with the past and believed that national thinking of the interwar period, perhaps fortified with Cold War anti-Communism, would provide a good basis for national unity and safeguard Finland's sovereignty and democracy in the post-1945 world. Others argued that if a country such as Finland was to escape being torn apart by the Cold War—from outside or from within—it could not afford too much Communism *or* anti-Communism. To retain its independence and democracy, Finland had to find a new middle way. By 1960—after the domestic and Soviet political crises of the late 1950s—an increasing number of actors agreed that in the ongoing “war of ideologies,” the lack of a “true national compromise” benefited only the political forces that were suspected to be the least loyal to the state, nation, and democracy. In this context, by offering neutrality and democracy as cornerstones of a new national compromise, the HMP policies made their contribution.

### **New National Thinking, Neutrality, and Democracy**

In 1960 the Finnish government (with centrist political parties in the majority) appointed an official state committee to investigate “the ideational and attitudinal foundations of the citizens’ affection for their state” and their willingness to defend its core values, by arms if necessary. The establishment of the committee was inspired by the Swedish psychological defense policies that had been updated in the early 1950s. Yet, even if the concept of psychological defense—corresponding with *psykologiskt försvar* in Sweden—remained on the Finnish committee’s agenda, the committee consciously chose to adopt a broader state-ideological approach modeled on the Swiss GLV.<sup>26</sup>

The committee members sensed that, in the context of the ideological Cold War, patriotism itself—its key concepts, values, sources of motivation, and objectives—had to be redefined and “modernized.” The old nationalist sentiments would be of no help to citizens facing the propaganda of continual ideological warfare in their everyday lives. The Finnish committee came to rely on basic tools of modern sociology, especially ideas about the factors that

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26. For a more detailed discussion of the models, see Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*, pp. 106–108.

strengthened group solidarity and helped to regulate societal conflict. In the new, modernized national thinking, the officially recognized core values of Finland as a state and nation were democracy *and* neutrality.

The committee's report (1962/1964) concluded that, whereas the traditions of Nordic democracy were already widely known among the people and were already an integral part of Finland's political culture, the Cold War ideological confrontation called for a deeper public understanding of the nature of democratic rights and freedoms.<sup>27</sup> The need to educate the public about modern democracy was an ongoing concern, but the need for education about a second core value, neutrality, was even more pronounced. As a national value, neutrality was of more recent origin and therefore was not as widely or well understood by policymakers and citizens.<sup>28</sup>

Tools for educating the public about democracy and neutrality were borrowed from Sweden and, in particular, Switzerland, which was seen as the oldest of all democracies. Swiss citizens were believed to identify so much with the idea of defending the ideational basis of their state that the concepts of "citizen, defender of democracy" and "soldier, defender of neutrality" had merged. At the same time, the committee members stressed, the Swiss defense ethos was thoroughly defensive by nature: it was not directed against anything or anyone as such. This fit well with the idea of neutrality and, simultaneously, with the broader need to remove the anti-Soviet and anti-Communist elements of Finland's national ethos.

Drawing together the key factors of neutrality and democracy, the committee's report concluded that "a patriotic mindset emerges if all citizens voluntarily wish to maintain and develop the distinctive Finnish democratic way of life in their fatherland, which in terms of foreign policy is neutral." This conclusion set forth a realistic national mission that was simultaneously personal and close to all citizens, touching them in their daily routines and opinion formation.<sup>29</sup>

To inculcate the new national thinking among the people, the state committee proposed the establishment of a permanent board that would coordinate the work of subcommittees focused on different aspects of ideological defense

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27. The report by the state committee was published in 1964. See *Henkisen maanpuolustuksemme perustekijät, sen kokonaistavoitteet ja eri alojen tehtävät sekä johto- ja suorituselimet sodan ja rauhan aikana* (Mikkeli, Finland: Länsisavon Kirjapaino, 1964).

28. *Henkisen maanpuolustuksemme perustekijät*, cited in Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*, pp. 111–113.

29. *Henkisen maanpuolustuksemme perustekijät*, pp. 42–46, 139; and *Ylioppilaslehti*, 16 January 1961—also cited in Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*, pp. 111–114.



policy. This board (*Henkisen maanpuolustuksen suunnittelukunta*) became active in 1963. Its main tasks included educating citizens about HMP (e.g., by creating public sources of information); building (and polling) public opinions about neutrality, democracy, and national defense; and conducting public relations and research activities. According to one description, the board was responsible for nearly all aspects of social and political opinion formation at all layers of society, including state administration and political life, the media, the education system, and the many voluntary associations in Finnish society.<sup>30</sup>

Whereas the state committee had consisted of a handful of experts (sociologists, social psychologists, and analysts of Cold War military strategy and international relations), the board involved a much wider spectrum of participants. Around 50 individuals were more or less systematically involved in the meetings of various subcommittees and other activities of the board.<sup>31</sup> Among the board's many subcommittees, the largest and most important was the subcommittee for voluntary associations. Its participants represented more than 40 associations, spanning the major areas of organized civil society. One of the most influential participants was the trade unions confederation, whose official commitment to the new national thinking was deemed important for both contemporary and historical reasons.

## From High Noon to Rising Criticism

The “high noon” of HMP policies in Finland dates to the mid-1960s. In 1964 the board began to arrange tailor-made seminars for key groups and opinion makers in society and to compile lists of experts and journalists who could be recommended as keynote speakers and authors. The board initiated the so-called national defense courses that began to be organized annually in 1964 and also surveyed opinions and attitudes toward foreign and security policy. In the 1960s, hundreds of people in influential positions at the national, regional, and local levels of administration, within associations and other organized

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30. Pertti Joenniemi, *Sosiologian ensimmäinen ja toinen kentällinen: Osallistuminen henkisen maanpuolustuksen suunnittelukunnan toimintaan*, Tutkimustiedotteita No. 14. Rauhan- ja konfliktintutkimuslaitos (Tampere, Finland: TUR, 1978), p. 15. Joenniemi's research paper is a contemporary analysis of the participation of sociologists in ideological defense activities in the 1960s and 1970s.

31. The participants can be divided into four main groups: first, the group of “popular educators” and teachers; second, representatives from the organized interest groups and various associations of civil society (e.g., women, youth, sports, and other leisure-time organizations); third, civil servants (e.g., from the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, and education); and fourth, military personnel, most of whom were engaged in public relations, public information, and educational tasks.

interest groups, and within media, the schools, and governmental agencies participated in the activities organized by the HMP board.<sup>32</sup>

The board's activities received much publicity. The mainstream reception was positive, but the scale and ambition of the board's projects ensured that it did not escape criticism from either the traditional conservative right or the new radical left, although criticism from the former group rapidly faded after 1964 with the rise of the New Left. New-Left criticism welcomed the new "pluralist" readings of the nation but targeted the "alarmist and militarist worldview" promoted by HMP policies. The ideological defenders of the nation, in this view, not only neglected the most burning issues of contemporary world politics (peace, disarmament, and social development), but also used the ideas of a ceaseless ideological war as a pretext for attempting to militarize civil society. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the New Left critics of the HMP policies were challenged by even more radical far-left critics who accused the HMP policies of being the bourgeoisie's main weapon in the ideological and psychological "trench warfare" whereby citizens were to be integrated "in the spirit of the Winter War national unity" and Communism was to be domesticated by integrating it into a nationalist, capitalist society. The Communist Party of Finland (SKP), based in Moscow until 1944, loudly demanded the dissolution of the HMP board.<sup>33</sup> Soviet criticism was persistent as well, often targeting Finnish interpretations of neutrality for supposedly leaning too far to the West.<sup>34</sup>

Eventually, public opposition to the HMP policies grew so vehement that the board declared itself unable to act. In 1975, a parliamentary committee recommended the abolition of the board and the transfer of some of its functions to a new authority with a more limited agenda and composition. The Maanpuolustustiedotuksen suunnittelukunta (Advisory Board for Defense Information; MTS), administratively under the authority of the

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32. The courses have maintained their prestige to the present day and are commonly viewed as one of the main arenas for elite-level consensus-building in matters of foreign and security policy in Finland. See, for instance, a recent research report on the long-term effectiveness of the national defense courses: Peter Ekholm, *Ymmärrystä yli rajojen: Valtakunnallisten maanpuolustuskurssien vaikutavuus* (Helsinki: National Defence University, 2006). See also Laura Kolbe, *Yhteistä turvallisuutta rakentamassa: Maanpuolustusopetuksen ja -yhdistyksen vaiheita 1961–2011* (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskurssiyhdistys, 2011).

33. For a more detailed discussion, see Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*, pp. 142–146.

34. On the increasingly critical Soviet views and their influence on Finnish interpretations of neutrality, see, for instance, Osmo Apunen, *Silmän politiikkaa: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti 1961–2006* (Helsinki: Otava, 2011); and Pekka Visuri, *Idän ja lännen välissä: Puolustuspolitiikka presidentti Kekkonen kaudella* (Espoo, Finland: Fenix-Kustannus, 2010). For an English-language overview of this issue, see Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*, pp. 139–142.

Ministry of Defense, replaced the HMP board. The new board reincarnated many of the older board's subcommittees and main functions; notably, its research, public information, citizen education, and opinion-polling activities on neutrality specifically and on foreign and security policy more generally. The MTS proved more resilient than its predecessor and continued to work through the remainder of the Cold War to make neutrality known and approved by Finnish citizens.

## **The End of the Cold War: Continuity and Discontinuity in Finnish Foreign Policy**

As the geopolitical and geostrategic structures and conditions that had necessitated Finland's neutrality policy dissolved with the end of the Cold War, one might have expected to see a corresponding change in Finnish foreign and security policy. If the established view were correct and Finland's neutrality policy was nothing more than a byproduct of and an adaptation to the Cold War's bipolar international system, it should have disappeared once that system collapsed, together with the various negative concepts associated with it, such as Finlandization and the Finnish policy of appeasing Moscow. As British political scientist David Arter wrote in an article published in 1996, Finnish neutrality

had been a "designer neutrality", designed to the particular requirements of Finland's post-war situation and tailored to the realities of the nation's *Ostpolitik*. . . . The design ultimately became passé—dated by the collapse of Cold War security configurations—and, to a degree, discredited by its association with the past.<sup>35</sup>

According to this view, Finland's 1995 membership in the EU and its abandonment of neutrality policy brought to a close this chapter in the history of Finnish foreign relations.

The end of the Cold War, the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, and EU membership did, of course, change the external context and the requirements and institutional conditions of Finnish foreign policy. Other authors have described Finnish foreign policy at this juncture as having been in a "transformative phase" that resulted in the "narrowing down" of Finnish

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35. David Arter, "Finland: From Neutrality to NATO?" *European Security*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 1996), pp. 614–632.

neutrality to the concept's military-strategic core.<sup>36</sup> The main reasons for this change were the requirements of EU membership, which were seen to have made the principles and practices of Finland's Cold War neutrality obsolete. However, neither this transformation nor the emergence of the new foreign policy consensus was as swift and thorough as is commonly assumed. The turnaround from neutrality policy to "military non-alignment" was planned and executed by a relatively small group of policymakers in early 1992 and rested on narrower political and popular opinion foundations than the approval of neutrality in the Cold War. Although Finland's post-Cold War foreign policy is in some respects strikingly discontinuous from its Cold War-era policy—primarily thanks to the demands emanating from Finland's EU membership—many basic assumptions were carried over from the earlier period.

The deep entrenchment of neutrality in Finnish foreign policy doctrine could be seen when superpower dialogue was resumed in the mid-1980s. Even though the renewal of détente raised hopes in Finland for a less-constrained international posture, the basic foreign policy line—neutrality combined with a well-functioning working relationship between Finnish and Soviet leaders and the maintenance of economic and other ties with the rest of the world—did not change. President Mauno Koivisto (1982–1994) placed much faith in the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, as a bold reformer, achieving a "genuine dialogue" with him early on, as Koivisto describes in his memoirs.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, Koivisto did not seek to use the suddenly more flexible Soviet attitude as an excuse for departing from or widening the boundaries of traditional Finnish Cold War neutrality. To the contrary, he sought to strengthen that neutrality, using policies and initiatives mostly inherited from his predecessor. In addition to pursuing a stronger and more credible neutral status for Finland, Koivisto wanted the country to be actively involved as a neutral bridge builder in East-West diplomacy.<sup>38</sup> By following this line, he could rely

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36. Hanna Ojanen, Gunilla Herolf, and Rutger Lindahl, *Non-alignment and European Security Policy: Ambiguity at Work* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute for International Affairs; Bonn: Institut für Europäische Politik, 2000), pp. 86–154; Kari Möttölä, "Puolueettomuudesta sitoutumiseen: Turvallisuuspoliittisen perusratkaisun muutos kylmästä sodasta Euroopan muurokseen," in Tuomas Forsberg and Tapani Vaahtoranta, eds., *Johdatus Suomen ulkopoliittikkaan: Kylmästä sodasta uuteen maailmanjärjestykseen* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 1993), pp. 62–135; Raimo Väyrynen, "Kylmästä sodasta uuteen maailmanjärjestykseen: Suomen ulkopoliittikan kansainvälinen ympäristö," in Forsberg and Vaahtoranta, eds., *Johdatus Suomen ulkopoliittikkaan*, pp. 25–61; and Alpo M. Rusi and Jukka Salovaara, "Kylmän sodan jälkeinen epävarma rauha: Suomi Euroopan kehittyvän turvallisuusalueen osapuolena," in Forsberg and Vaahtoranta, eds., *Johdatus Suomen ulkopoliittikkaan*, pp. 136–165.

37. Mauno Koivisto, *Kaksi Kautta II: Historian tekijät*. (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1995), p. 173. See also his translated memoirs, *Witness to History* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997).

38. Koivisto, *Witness to History*.

on solid domestic support and favorable public opinion, although his lukewarm attitude toward Baltic aspirations for independence was criticized in 1990–1991.

Not wanting to risk his main goals, Koivisto favored a low-key approach toward the institutions of West European cooperation, and only after a period of protracted reflection did he allow the Finnish government to carry through a long-planned and -discussed membership in the Council of Europe in 1987–1989, a time when no socialist countries were yet members.<sup>39</sup> Koivisto's maintenance of this careful line was ultimately rewarded in October 1989, when Gorbachev paid a state visit to Helsinki and explicitly acknowledged Finnish neutrality without the customary reservations.

When analyzing Finnish foreign policy at the end of the 1980s, one must bear in mind that the preservation of the status quo and the anchoring of neutrality policy in it had been one of the fundamental elements of the policy throughout the Cold War.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Finnish foreign policymakers considered the international system to be extremely stable, even as the Cold War was coming to a close. An important factor in Finnish analysis of superpower relations at the end of the 1980s was the assumed persistence of the international system's bipolar structure and the related constraints it placed on the other actors. Shortly before the political upheavals of 1989 in East-Central Europe, officials at the Finnish Foreign Ministry anticipated that the relaxation of the Cold War would significantly reduce the likelihood of large-scale conflicts, but they did not anticipate any changes beyond that and did not foresee any movement toward a multipolar or unipolar international system. The détente of the late 1980s, on the contrary, was thought to have created better conditions for the stable and predictable functioning of the bipolar system.

In his 1988 doctoral dissertation, Finland's long-time Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen, then chairman of the Centre Party and the pivotal force in the making of the Kekkonen-era foreign policy consensus, predicted that conditions surrounding Finland's established neutrality policy would remain essentially stable.<sup>41</sup> Gorbachev's reforms potentially strengthened the superpower status of the Soviet Union. To Väyrynen, the East-West ideological and power-political standoff seemed unlikely to disappear completely. What was

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39. Aunesluoma, *Vapaakaupan tiellä*, pp. 399–403.

40. Esko Antola, "The Burden of History: Finland as a Status Quo Country," *The International Spectator*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (1994), pp. 65–79.

41. Paavo Väyrynen, *Finlands utrikespolitik—Den nationella doktrinen och framtidens mänsklichetspolitik* (Juva, Finland: Söderströms & C:o Förlags AB, 1988), pp. 206–210, 302.

more likely to happen, he believed, was that the European Community (EC) and leading Western European countries would adopt a higher profile and gain in significance compared to the United States, which seemed to be retreating from European defense and from European politics in general as a result of the new détente.

Geopolitical bipolarity remained the basic assumption behind Finnish foreign policy until the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991 and its succession by a much weaker and less globally oriented power, the Russian Federation. However, even after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia was expected to play a key role in European security, albeit in a less menacing if also less predictable way. In any case, a weaker Russia was still strong enough for Finland, and, so the reasoning went, a need to maintain bilateral Finnish-Russian relations provided a rationale for many observers to maintain rather than abandon the neutralist line toward Finland's eastern neighbor.<sup>42</sup> Even for those who were willing to consider and support more far-reaching changes in Finnish foreign policy, the general systemic uncertainty only strengthened the perceived need for a reactive rather than proactive foreign policy.<sup>43</sup>

Although Finnish policymakers did eventually decide to redefine their country's neutrality policy in a fundamental way in 1992, the upheavals of 1989 in East-Central Europe gave a crucial fillip to the process. Three distinct developments influenced Finnish neutrality policy during this period: (1) the end of the Cold War superpower confrontation and the related European developments in 1989–1990; (2) the breakup of the Soviet Union itself in 1991; and (3) Finland's decision in 1992 to seek EU membership.

As soon as the political democratization of Soviet-bloc countries in East-Central Europe began in earnest in 1989, the Finnish foreign policy community understood that the events would have systemic consequences far beyond what had been anticipated earlier. This realization, however, did not lead to a reconsideration of neutrality policy as a vehicle with desirable benefits for Finnish security. On the contrary, emboldened by Gorbachev's expression of unequivocal support for Finnish neutrality during a visit to Helsinki in

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42. This was a key argument among the traditionalist neutralist camp, which campaigned against Finland's EU membership before 1995. Keijo Korhonen, *Luota Suomeen, suomalainen!* (Helsinki: Kuva ja Sana: 1993); and Jan Magnus Jansson, "Finland mellan Ryssland och EU," *Finsk tidskrift*, 1994, pp.111–118.

43. The "search for stability" thesis is the main argument in Jaakko Blomberg's extensive volume on Finnish foreign policymaking at the end of the Cold War, published in 2011 and based on personal recollections and documentation. Blomberg was a key official in the Finnish Foreign Ministry at the time and responsible, among other things, for policy planning functions. See Jaakko Blomberg, *Vakauden kaipuu: Kylmän sodan loppu ja Suomi* (Helsinki: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 2011).

October 1989, Finland took advantage of the situation by consolidating its neutrality policy even further and maintaining the foreign policy tactics and doctrine that had been adopted during the worst crises of the Cold War.<sup>44</sup> If officials had harbored doubts in the past about how well neutrality served the ultimate goal of safeguarding the nation's interests, those doubts by 1990 had been cast aside.<sup>45</sup>

Finland responded to the changes that followed the political upheavals of 1989 with a combination of unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral diplomatic initiatives and approaches, all of which were aimed at maximizing Finland's security and sovereignty as a neutral country. The most important step was taken in 1990, when the Finnish government unilaterally reinterpreted the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty obligations and restrictions on Finland's military capabilities and also revised the 1948 FCMA Treaty's stipulations concerning Germany in light of the reunification of Germany and the consequent disappearance of the conditions that had been in place when the treaty was originally signed.

Known as "Operation Pax," the revision of the treaties, orchestrated by President Koivisto and carried out by a small group of civil servants and advisers, was announced in September 1990 to the astonishment of observers in and beyond Finland. The Finnish government now interpreted the Paris Peace Treaty's many restrictions on Finland's defense as having lost their meaning.<sup>46</sup> The FCMA Treaty's references to the threat from Germany were considered to have become similarly obsolete.<sup>47</sup> Whereas the political upheavals in Europe in 1989 had not fundamentally altered Finland's own international position, the unification of Germany (and the Soviet Union's acquiescence) did mark a fundamental shift. Nonetheless, remarkably little change was made at this

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44. A good example of this was a speech by Foreign Minister Pertti Paasio in January 1990 in which he stated that Finland's position remained unaltered despite the ongoing changes in Europe. See Ulkoasiainministeri Pertti Paasio Euroklubin seminaarissa 31.1.1990, <http://www.eilen.fi/2893/>.

45. Even Paavo Lipponen, one of the most vocal opponents of the view that Finland's neutrality was grounded in Finnish identity during the Cold War, chose his words carefully in 1990, when the opportunity arose for a radical shift in Finnish foreign policy: "Finnish foreign policy is equal to the concept of neutrality policy. The position of neutrality has been considered the main goal of foreign policy—for President Urho Kekkonen it was his life's work." (The original in Finnish is: "Suomen ulkopoliittikka samastetaan laajalti käsitteeseen puolueettomuuspolitiikka. Puolueettomuusaseman turvaaminen on koettu ulkopoliittikan päätavoitteeksi—presidentti Urho Kekkosen se oli elämäntyö.") See Paavo Lipponen, preface to Raimo Väyrynen, ed., *Suomen puolueettomuuden tulevaisuus* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1990), pp. 7–12. In his other writings, Lipponen nonetheless sought to distance himself from Finland's neutrality, instead pushing for its fundamental revision.

46. Koivisto, *Witness to History*, pp. 359–365.

47. On Operation Pax, see the account of one of the actors on the Finnish side, René Nyberg, "Olette kajoanneet yyy-sopimukseen," *Kanava*, No. 1 (2008), pp. 4–11.

stage in the definition and understanding of Finland as a neutral country positioned between the East and the West.

Continuity in Finnish neutrality policy remained strong even in the following year, when the Soviet Union itself began to fall apart as a result of failing reforms and growing dissatisfaction in the Soviet republics and their push toward full independence. After the attempted coup in August 1991 failed to restore the authority of the Communist Party and hardline rule in Moscow, the Finns began making preparations to renegotiate the entire FCMA Treaty. Their goal was to renew the treaty in a form that would allow Finland to follow neutrality policy in a more politically and legally credible form, as well as to pave the way for a successful EC membership bid, should that option be opened to Finland. Prior to December 1991, there was no prospect of Finnish membership because the organization's doors were closed to new members pending its internal reform and consolidation, which was agreed in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Finland pursued the renewal and redrafting of the 1948 FCMA Treaty with the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, but events soon overtook the negotiations. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the treaty was buried and replaced by a largely ceremonial cooperation treaty between Russia and Finland.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to these unilateral and bilateral operations, multilateral diplomacy served the same end. Finland's increased activity in multilateral diplomatic arenas such as the CSCE (and its successor, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and the UN Security Council, where Finland was a rotating member in 1989–1990, was in part motivated by a genuine wish to see these actors gain strength and importance in international affairs. For the most part, however, Finland was following a policy established in the 1960s, according to which activity in multilateral international institutions primarily served to strengthen Finland's status as a neutral country and a diplomatic intermediary in international politics.

The end result of the events of 1990–1991 was that any obvious checks on Finland's neutrality policy had disappeared. By this point, however, the biggest challenge to Finnish neutrality was not the Soviet Union or the Cold War endgame but developments in European integration.<sup>49</sup> Without the need to modify Finland's neutrality policy to fit the requirements of EU membership,

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48. Blomberg, *Vakauden kaipuu*, pp. 407–439.

49. This view was widely shared at the time and was anticipated in the late 1980s to create pressure on Finland to revise its neutrality policy. See Harto Hakovirta, "The Nordic Neutrals in Western European Integration: Current Pressures, Restraints and Options," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (September 1987), pp. 265–273.



Finnish foreign and security policy might have undergone little further change in the 1990s. At the same time, the change that did occur was less comprehensive than suggested by the official rhetoric, which was designed to win over Finland's skeptical would-be partners in the newly created EU.

Whereas Operation Pax and the strengthening of Finland's neutrality at the close of the Cold War are a relatively straightforward story, the European integration process in the early 1990s put Finnish political leaders on the horns of a dilemma. By the end of 1991 and the EC's Maastricht summit, it had become clear that the EC was moving toward a deeper economic and political union and that it planned to start membership negotiations with new applicant countries such as Austria and Sweden. This changed the whole context of Finnish integration policy as well as that of the other European neutrals.

From the late 1950s on, Finland had participated in economic integration through a series of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements and therefore had managed to separate the economic from the political in its foreign trade and integration policies.<sup>50</sup> Neutrality, not to mention Soviet reservations, blocked Finland from participating in or developing close institutional relations with the EC. At the same time, a line was drawn between integration policy and neutrality. This moved the purely economic and trade aspects of integration to the forefront when dealing with the EC and separated other foreign policy issues into a different category.

As was the case in East-West relations, Finnish views on integration policy were first and foremost conditioned by the need to preserve and strengthen neutrality. As long as Finland was not itself willing to join the EC, and given the development toward a political union and the higher profile it might assume in international politics, the rationale for the continuation of Finland's neutrality policy was still intact. Even though Finnish leaders were deeply interested in the economic aspects of European integration, political developments within the community and the EC's aspirations for a great-power role in world politics made membership impossible to consider.<sup>51</sup>

50. Aunesluoma *Vapaakaupan tiellä*, pp. 88–91; Tapani Paavonen, *Vapaakauppaintegraation kausi: Suomen suhde Länsi-Euroopan integraatioon FINN-EFTA-sopimuksesta EC-vapaakauppaan* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1988); and Harto Hakovirta, *Puolueettomuus ja integraatiopolitiikka: Tutkimus puolueettoman valtion adaptaatiosta alueelliseen integraatioon teorian, vertailujen ja Suomen poikkeavan tapauksen valossa* (Tampere, Finland: Acta Universitatis Tampensis, 1976), Ser. A:78.

51. Foreign Trade Minister Pertti Salolainen's speech "Länsi-Euroopan integraatio," Helsinki, 29 March 1988, in *Ulkopoliittisia lausuntoja ja asiakirjoja 1988* (Helsinki: Ulkoasiainministeriön julkaisuja, 1989).

At first, the traditional, neutralist, semi-detached integration policy seemed to work in the post-Cold War environment. Until early 1992, the goal of Finnish integration policy was to safeguard Finnish economic and trade interests by securing access to the single European market when it became operational in 1993. Neutrality policy did not have to be modified to achieve this goal, which would be fulfilled via the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement that had been negotiated between the EC and European Free Trade Association members from 1989 to 1992 and was scheduled to enter into force in 1994.

Among Finnish policymakers, from the president on down, the primary goal was to negotiate the EEA agreement first and only after that to consider whether EC membership might be possible. This was the policy until late autumn 1991. President Koivisto was most reluctant to go further than this, and when he finally changed course and began to support EU membership, he considered it primarily in economic terms and not as a definite break or a new opening in foreign and security policy.<sup>52</sup> Members of Esko Aho's Centre Party government (1991–1995), including Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen, held similar views and stressed the continuity of Finland's neutrality even as the country was moving toward EU membership. Väyrynen went so far as to claim that Finland had reverted to the neutrality policy it had followed before the Second World War.

The decision to enter the EU compelled Finnish leaders—from the president on down, including, in 1994, the voters in a referendum—to redefine Finnish neutrality in a way that would be compatible with EU membership. However, the outcome was not the wholesale abandonment of the previous policy that Finland's EU membership application would have one believe. The starting point of Finland's application in 1992 was that it accepted the Maastricht Treaty as a point of departure for its membership, including the treaty's plans to develop common defense and foreign and security policy, as well as the political goals enshrined in the union's *finalité politique*. Acceptance of these points precluded the sort of neutrality that Finland had embraced during the Cold War. However, as could be seen in the acceptance of Sweden, Austria, and Finland, each with its own individual characteristics, legacies, and foreign policy profiles, the EU was willing to be flexible.

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52. In a Swedish-language memoir, Koivisto writes that he himself thought the "road to [EU] membership was not necessarily the one we should take. We did not know what it would mean. My starting point was that we would not give up our right to make our own security and foreign policy decisions. On the other hand, we could not include in our membership application reservations in security policy matters, which might then be rejected. Where would we be standing then?" Mauno Koivisto, *Granmar: Frändskap och friktion* (Stockholm: Atlantis Söderströms, 2008), pp. 189–190.

Given the EU's willingness to accommodate Finland and the other Cold War European neutrals within its newly created structures of foreign and security policy and defense cooperation, Finnish foreign policymakers were uncertain how far Finland should go in reformulating its neutrality policy. In the end, neutrality was narrowed from its maximalist Cold War definitions to the more traditional definition of military non-alignment in peacetime.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the Finnish government proclaimed its commitment to credible national defense. The new formulation was agreed in early 1992 together with the decision to apply for EU membership and was described as follows:

In the constellation that has emerged after the Cold War, the nucleus of Finland's neutrality policy is emphasized to remain outside military alliances, so that in a possible war situation or during a military crisis our country could remain neutral. In support of this goal, Finland maintains an appropriate national defense capability, which is credible in relation to its security environment.

This language retains much of the older policy, and the stress on military non-alignment and an independent, credible national defense capability belies not a move toward closer de facto alignment but the preservation of as much of Finland's Cold War neutrality as possible in the new situation. As such, the phrase "Finland's neutrality policy" is characteristic of the new line.

This foreign policy platform and definition of military non-alignment became the established position when Finland handed in its application to the commission in Brussels in March 1992, and it remained the basic definition of Finnish foreign and security policy long into the future. Subsequently, it was amended to include a stronger commitment to the EU's common foreign and security policy and to its crisis management operations, and even to include an "option" to seek NATO membership if the need arose.

However, the extent to which the remnants of neutrality could be reconciled with EU membership continued to divide opinion in Finland.<sup>54</sup> Finnish diplomats spent much of their time and energy trying to allay any remaining suspicions within the EU about the level of Finland's commitment to the

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53. Ojanen dates this narrowing or "softening" process to 1988–1990 using governmental reports to the parliament as evidence, but the evidence is too murky to warrant a conclusion of actual change in neutrality policy formulations before 1991–1992. Ojanen, Herolf, and Lindahl, *Non-alignment*.

54. On the Europeanization of Finnish foreign policy thinking in the EU and the debates in the parliament on foreign policy, see Teemu Palosaari, *The Art of Adaptation: A Study on the Europeanization of Finland's Foreign and Security Policy*, TAPRI Studies in Peace and Conflict Research 96 (Tampere, Finland: TUP, 2011); and Jussi Seppälä, "Europe through a Nation's Eyes: Explaining Finland's Orientation towards EU Security Integration," in Tuomas Forsberg, Timo Kivimäki, and Liisa Laakso, eds., *Europe in Context: Insights to the Foreign Policy of the EU*, Finnish International Studies Association Publications, No. 1, (Espoo, Finland: Fenix-Kustannus, 2007), pp. 21–35.

Maastricht Treaty. Not everybody in Brussels or the other European capitals was so easily prepared to accept that “neutral” Finland had so swiftly aligned itself behind the EU’s political goals.<sup>55</sup>

A good deal of continuity existed in Finnish foreign and security policy even during the period of systemic change at the end of the Cold War and even in the terms in which Finland became a member of the EU in 1995. When an opportunity arose to strengthen Finland’s neutrality policy after 1989, Finnish foreign policymakers quickly and firmly took advantage of it. However, only with much reluctance and internal wrangling within the Finnish government was Finnish neutrality narrowed down to its military-political core and reformulated to fit the requirements of EU membership. Even then, the transformation from the neutrality policy of the Cold War era into a more active and engaging foreign policy within the EU was an incremental process and not quite the fresh start that Finland’s new pro-European and pro-Atlanticist leaders wanted Finland’s new—and rightly suspicious—EU partners and the Finnish people to believe it was.

## Conclusion

Beginning in the mid-1990s, Finland’s political elite, with some exceptions, were determined to let go of neutrality together with the end of the Cold War confrontation. In the mid-1990s, the concept was narrowed to military security policy before vanishing from the vocabularies of official policy. Neutrality was seen to have no role whatsoever once Finland joined the EU, because EU membership was thought to replace neutrality as an instrument and framework of Finland’s participation in international affairs. Public opinion, however, did not grow more supportive of Finland joining NATO, and public support for a common European defense and security policy as well as the EU’s foreign and security policy remained lower in Finland and the other formerly neutral EU member-states than in the NATO member-states.<sup>56</sup>

This article shows that the observed durability of the legacy of neutrality, especially at the level of mentality and identity, can be understood through a historically grounded analysis of the multilayered and embedded nature of

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55. Törnudd, “Ties,” pp. 37–68; and Ojanen, Herolf, and Lindahl, *Non-alignment*, p. 103.

56. In the Eurobarometer public opinion monitoring series, “the neutral countries” are frequently mentioned as a group that stands out as being below the European average in their support for common European foreign and security policy. For more, see [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_arch\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm).

neutrality policy during the Cold War. Finland's Cold War policy of neutrality cannot be reduced to mere pragmatism and strategic thinking. Neutrality became an integral part of how common people and policymakers alike thought about Finland. That is, neutrality became a part of Finland's national identity and a key element in its distinctively national state ideology.

Moreover, at the close of the Cold War, neutrality was not just a useful foreign policy option and a tool to maximize Finnish sovereignty within the rigidities of the current international system but a source of real, tangible security and even self-esteem and pride in the arenas of international cooperation and diplomacy. What eventually challenged the doctrine of neutrality was not so much the end of the Cold War but European integration. Yet, even after joining the EU in 1995, the popular legacy of Finland's Cold War neutrality remained alive, reflected both in public opinion and in a more widely held wish to remain on the outside of the various military crises and conflicts of the 2000s in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Finland's Cold War neutrality was perpetually overshadowed by Finland's bilateral relations with the Soviet Union and, especially, the FCMA Treaty. These relations encouraged Finnish leaders to anticipate Soviet stances, which, in turn, facilitated debates on Finlandization. For Finland, the link between its Cold War neutrality and Finlandization has so far been a relatively harmless, if inconvenient, historical burden that has undoubtedly contributed to the will to abandon the concept of neutrality as a whole. The Finnish debate on Finlandization has not been a history debate in any academic sense. Rather, it has been a debate about political identity and Finland's "belonging to the West," to Europe, and to the various cores of the EU. Even though the debate on Finlandization made political sense in the context of the mid-1990s and onward, it should not be seen as the historically most accurate interpretation of Finland's Cold War neutrality and its meanings. Finland's historical neutrality needs to be considered from a new, broader perspective, one informed by scholarship, that recognizes neutrality's multilayered and embedded features and their significance in the creation and durability of Finnish collective identities in the twentieth century and beyond.

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